

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

Experts advise EU countries on 2020 reduction targets for marine litter

Brussels, 12th January 2012. A group of experts on marine litter has advised EU countries on setting reduction targets for marine litter for 2020. Member States now have 6 months to act on this advice and set ambitious reduction targets in order to combat this growing problem.

In 2010, Member States of the European Union agreed to consult a group of experts on the development of the Union's Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) specific to marine litter, in part to consider the sorts of targets that should be set for 2020. The final report of the group was published earlier this week.

"This report makes a strong case for setting practical marine litter reduction targets for 2020. The problem of marine litter and particularly plastic pollution in our seas is growing and is a major concern for marine wildlife, marine industries, coastal communities and human health. Member States must take this advice on board and set out ambitious marine litter reduction targets for 2020," said **Chris Carroll of Seas At Risk**.

Beaches in the North East Atlantic have on average 712 pieces of litter per 100m of beach and almost all North Sea Fulmars, a bird that feeds exclusively at sea, are found with plastic in their stomachs. The economic costs are also damaging with coastal municipalities in the Netherlands and UK spending on average €28 million per year cleaning beaches.

With "garbage patches" forming across the world's oceans, most notably in the Pacific and the western part of the North Atlantic Ocean, urgent action is needed to stop the accumulation of marine litter.

Under the MSFD, Member States are obliged by July of this year to have set environmental targets for 2020 to improve the environmental status of their waters. Marine litter is one of 11 marine environmental problems that is accounted for under the MSFD. Other "descriptors" cover the over-exploitation of fish stocks, biodiversity loss and marine noise.

The report proposes a number of absolute reduction targets for marine litter on beaches, in marine biota and in the water column and sets out a number of different monitoring protocols for consideration by Member States.

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Notes:

- 1) Seas At Risk is a European association of non-governmental environmental organisations working to protect and restore to health the marine environment of the European seas and the wider North East Atlantic.
- 2) Link to the report:
http://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/bitstream/111111111/22826/1/msfd_ges_tsg_marine_litter_report_eur_25009_en_print_version.pdf
- 3) Link for more information on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive:
<http://www.seas-at-risk.org/n2.php?page=12>

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